

**Beaver Brook Farm Committee
January 14 2016**

Present for the Committee: Chairman Ellis Neofotistos, Don Plummer, Dave Paquin, May Paquette and Debra Dewitt Ahearn. Also present was Elizabeth Ware, Director of Community Development and Recording Secretary Samantha Carver. The meeting was held at the Town Hall in the 2nd floor administration conference room.

Absent: Warren Shaw, Andy Graham

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and, after a short discussion with the committee about meeting times, welcomed Jennifer Hashley from the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project (NESFP). Ms. Hashley explained that she was the Project Director and that her group offered beginner farmer training programs. The program, which is affiliated with Tufts University, has offices in downtown Lowell (above a jewelry store) and Chinatown in Boston, as well as two farm sites in Lowell and Newburyport, Ma. They teach farm business planning courses and provide incubator training programs on several sites in Dracut. They would like for their offices and farm fields to be in one location for efficiency and oversight.

Within the past several years they had considered the Broken Wheel farm in Dracut, MA. However they could not reach an agreement with the property owner. Ms. Hashley indicated that they worked with Trust for Public Land (TPL), who was willing to acquire the property with the understanding that NESFP would fundraise to reimburse TPL for their loan of funds.

The program offers a “food hub” -Food Peas- which is a community access food program and provide connections for people to get good quality food. NESFP are involved in land matching services getting farmers to appropriately matched leased land or identifying land to acquire.

NESFP’s main goal is to provide technical assistance to train farmers of all levels, with the focus on beginning farmers. They are funded via grants (Ms. Hashley wrote about 70 grants last year, with grant requests ranging from \$5k to \$600k.)

The BBFC explained that they are presently assessing what uses would be appropriate on BBF and that they had determined that recreational uses (sledding, skiing, hiking, camping, gardening, cross country trails, picnicking, etc.), agricultural uses (limited farming and farm education, with keeping the field on Mammoth Road open), events, farm museum and other uses were all uses that they had considered. A huge endowment was needed for the infrastructure and buildings on the property. A presence on the property was also needed on a regular basis to limit damage to the property. Ms. Hashley stated that their operation was a more 9-5pm operation Monday through Friday, with no one around on weekends.

The BBFC and staff discussed the conditions of each building, noting that a preservation consultant would be coming to complete a conditions assessment on January 22, 2016. The BBFC stated that they would like to see a portion of the squash barn (the area presently used as Peter Richardson’s office) to be used for a small museum. The group discussed the fact that the

BBFC
01-14-2016

nitrogen system from the manure pits might need to be revitalized. It was further noted that the Italian terra cotta material on the silo, dairy barn complex and squash barn was in varying degrees of failure. The main house, constructed in 1735, would likely need systems replaced, a new roof and other updates.

Mr. Plummer noted that there were a lot of CPC funds available for historic preservation but the BBFC was waiting for the report from the preservation consultant. He further stated that he would like to see some form of educational component on the farm and that this educational component be tied to the Dracut School System, as well as other organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and other similar organizations.

The BBFC encouraged Ms. Hashley to walk the farm and review the property with her organization in mind. Ms. Hashley and Betsy Ware are to coordinate to walk the property on a Tuesday or Thursday, when Ms. Hashley is working in Lowell.

Discussion on Meeting Dates

The Committee discussed establishing a regular meeting schedule for the Committee. It was discussed that they could meet the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month to not interfere with other committees. Mrs. Dewitt-Ahearn made a motion to establish the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month for Beaver Brook Farm Committee. Mr. Plummer seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Site Inspection by Brian Pfeiffer

Ms. Ware reported that Mr. Pfeiffer is supposed to do his site walk and assessment at Beaver Brook next Friday (January 22, 2016).

Ms. Ware stated depending on Mr. Pfeiffer's report will determine what grants they may want to try and get. They also have to do the restrictions on the property, these do not need Town Meeting approval these are State restrictions under Chapter 44 Sections 31-33 and various State offices are involved.

The Committee discussed what will happen in September when Mr. Richardson moves out. The Committee discussed whether to approach Mr. Richardson to see if he wants to stay longer. There was speculation that his wife does not want to stay at the farm longer than September.

The Committee discussed coming up with a master plan before anything is planned on the property.

BBFC
01-14-2016

Adjourn

Mrs. Dewitt-Ahearn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Mr. Plummer seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

BEAVER BROOK FARM COMMITTEE







